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The Necessity and Holiness of
CHURCHES.

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the
CONSECRATION of the new
CHURCH at
KINGS-WOOD,

BEFORE
The Right Reverend Father in God
JOSEPH Lord Bishop of GLOUCESTER,
On Tuesday August the 27th, 1723.

By ROBERT BULL, Rector of Tort-
worth and Prebendary of GLOUCESTER; *K*

Publis'd at the Request of his LORDSHIP
and the CLERGY Present.

LONDON.

Printed for JOHN NICKS, at the *White-Hart*
in St. Paul's Church-yard. 1723.

13.

The Liberty and Helms of
CHURCHES

A

FERMON

Conservation of the new
CHURCH

KING
D. E. C.



The Right Reverend Father in God
JOSEPH Lord Bishop of Gloucester

On the 17th day of the 17th 1727.

ROBERT DILL, Esq. of Torr
Northampton

and the Clerk of the Court

LONDON.

Printed by J. K. at the White-Hall
in St. James's Church-yard 1727.



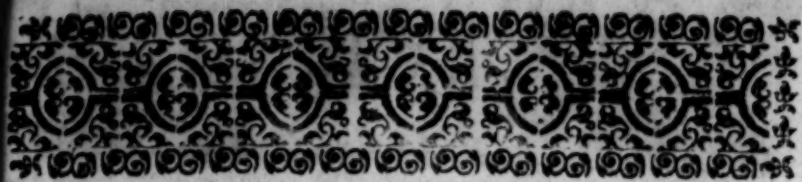
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TO THE
Right Reverend Father in GOD
J O S E P H Lord
Bishop of GLOUCESTER,

The following
DISCOURSE

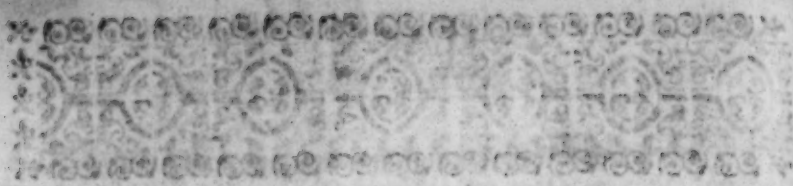
Is with all Humility Dedicated,

By his LORDSHIP'S

Most Dutiful and

most Obedient Servant,

ROBERT BULL.

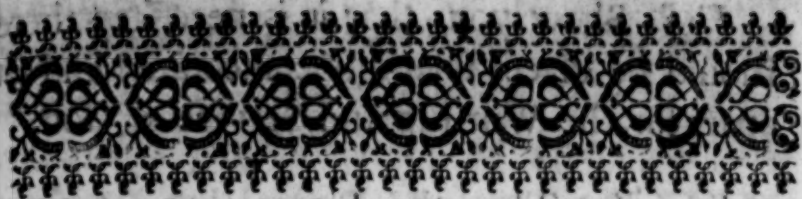


TO THE
Right Reverend Father in GOD
JOSEPH H. Lord
Bishop of Gloucester,
The following
DISCOURSE
Is with all Humility Dedicated;
By JOHN D. Smith
IN THE Year 1784
And Printed at the
Printers Office in London
ROBERT BULL



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PSALM v. 7.

*But as for me, I will come into thy
House in the multitude of thy
Mercy, and in thy Fear will I
Worship towards thy Holy Tem-
ple.*

I SHALL not detain you with a needless Preface concerning the Coherence of these Words with the Context, but consider them separately as an intire Sense of themselves, affording us Matter, proper to the Solemnity of this Day, and clearly injoining all due Respect and Reverence to the House of God, or the Places Dedicated and Consecrated to his solemn Worship. In the prosecution of which Design, I shall proceed in this Method.

First,

First, Shew you, that it is necessary there should be Places solemnly consecrated and set apart for the Worship and Service of God.

Secondly, That the Places thus set apart for his Worship, ought to be had in all due Respect and Reverence.

Thirdly, I shall by way of Application shew what that Respect and Reverence is, which is due to the House of God, or the Places thus Consecrated to his Service. And,

First, That it is necessary there should be Places solemnly Consecrated and Set apart for the Worship and Service of God. This is imply'd in the Text it self; for vain would have been the Resolution of the Royal Psalmist, *to come into the House of God* were there not some such Place, *viz.* the *Tabernacle* with the *Ark* therein for him to resort to. This of it self might be sufficient, but I shall make the Proposition further evident, *1st*, From the perpetual Practice of the Church of God in all Ages. And, *2dly*, From the universal Consent of all Nations, even the Heathens.

1st, From the perpetual Practice of the Church of God in all Ages. The Original

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of consecrated and separate Places for the Worship of God is so Antient, that we find that even the Sons of *Adam* had a Place, where to bring their Sacrifices, *Gen. iv. 3, 4* where 'tis said of *Cain* and *Abel*, that *they brought their Offerings to the Lord*. From whence it is observable, that they did not offer them in the very Places where they took them, but first *brought them to the Lord*; which cannot otherwise be Interpreted, than that they brought them to some determinate and appropriate Place, wherein they were accustomed to Worship God. And no less than this, seems to be intimated in the *14th Verse*, where we have *Cain*, thus complaining to God. *Thou hast driven me this Day from the Face of the Earth; and from thy Face shall I be hid, and I shall be a Fugitive and a Vagabond in the Earth*. And we read in the *16th Verse*, that *Cain* went out from the Presence of the Lord. It was it seems not the least Part of *Cain's* Curse, that he was as it were an Excommunicated Person, expell'd and driven from those Places, wherein *Adam* and his Sons did use to Worship God, and wherein God more especially manifested his Presence to them. From these Texts it appears that even *before the Flood*, there were certain Places dedicated to the Service of God.

Imme-

Immediately after, we find *Noah* erecting and consecrating *an Altar to the Lord*, and offering Sacrifice thereon, *Gen. viii. 20.* which Practice was afterwards continued by the Holy Patriarchs even when they were in Idolatrous Countries. Thus *Abraham* did, erecting an Altar in *Sichem*, *Gen. xii. 6, 7.* and another betwixt *Ai* and *Bethel*, *v. 8.* Concerning the latter of which it is observable that he goeth Professedly to that Place which he had before Consecrated, there to Worship God, looking on that as being a Consecrated, so the fittest Place for divine Worship, *Gen. xiii. 3, 4.* And for the former, that at *Sichem*, we find it used (some Hundreds of Years after,) as a Place for Religious Assemblies, and respected as a *Sanctuary of the Lord*, *Josh. xxiv. 26.* compared with *v. 1.* If it be here Objected, that 'twas the Tabernacle and Ark that are here call'd the Sanctuary of the Lord; I answer, that they were both of them set up by *Joshua* himself at *Shiloh*, and there remained, till the Time of the Captivity of the Land by the *Philistines*. See *Joshua xviii. 1.* compared with *1 Sam. iv. 3, 4.* Besides, this Sanctuary (whatever it was) must be something that had a constant and fix'd Station; and which was not Temporary or Mutable;

Mutable; because the Oak under which this Pillar was erected by *Joshua*, is here design'd and appointed as a Constant and Standing Mark (and not a moveable Thing as the Tabernacle and the Ark were,) that so it might be a Witness to them lest they should deny God. For these and other Reasons which might be produced, it is evident that the Sanctuary here spoken of was some other Place of Worship, and by comparing Texts it appears to be the same with that, which *Abraham* first Erected. Which leads me to a further Observation, *viz.* That the Holy Patriarchs contented not themselves with bare Altars, but in many Places erected compleat and more spacious Oratories for the Worship of God; which though open and uncover'd, were yet inclosed or fenc'd in with Hedges or Groves of Trees. For we find, *Gen. xxi. 33.* that *Abraham* planted a Grove in *Beersheba*, and call'd there on the Name of the Lord; the Everlasting God. And this kind of consecrated Places, in Imitation of the Patriarchs, continued among the *Jews* in after Ages, even till the Time of our Blessed Saviour; and they were then known by the Name of *προσκύματα*, Oratories or Places of Prayer: So that you see there were Places appointed and set apart for

Religious Worship, even in the *Time of the Patriarchs.*

Indeed, during the *Time of Israel's Bondage in Egypt*, as they were abridged of their Civil, so much more of their Religious Liberty, and therefore we cannot in Reason expect to find the Use of consecrated Places for the solemn Worship of God among them at that *Time*: But immediately after, almost as soon as ever they were come into the *Wilderness*, tho' they had then no settled Habitation for themselves, yet they were Commanded to make a moveable House or Tabernacle for God, *Exod. xxv. 8.* This Tabernacle, together with the other antient *Proseucha's* beforemention'd, served the Necessities of the Church, till the Days of peaceable and flourishing *Solomon*, and then a most magnificent Temple, glorious to the Astonishment of the whole World, was erected for the Worship of God. Besides which Temple, the *Jews* had in every considerable Place their Synagogues, whither they resorted for the Service of God. And so during the whole *Time of the Law*, as long as they had Houses for themselves, they were not without Houses for God's Worship; their Temple, their Synagogues, their *Proseucha's*, even till the *Time of Christ.*

Nor

Nor did our Saviour then take away this difference between Consecrated and Common Places, but gave us an Example to the contrary, in his frequent resort to the Temple and the Synagogues of the *Jews*, but especially in his Zeal to vindicate the House of God from Profanation, in that remarkable History which *St. Matthew* gives us, *Chap. xxi. v. 12. &c.* of which I shall have Occasion to speak more largely in the Sequel of my Discourse. And this Example of our Saviour was imitated by the Apostles and Primitive Christians, after Christ's Ascension, who (as he did) made use of the Temple and Synagogues of the *Jews*, as long as they were permitted; for we read, *Acts ii. 46.* that *they continued daily with one accord in the Temple.*

If it be here urged, that after the Apostles had separated themselves from the *Jews*, and set up pure Christian Assemblies, we find no separate Places for Religious Worship, but only that Christians met together in private Houses, as Convenience permitted them, without any such Solemnity. To this I answer;

1. That all this may be granted and yet serve nothing to the Purpose of the Objectors. For since the Apostles, as long as they were suffer'd, chose publick Consecrated Places for

Religious Worship, they thereby plainly declared their Judgment, that such Places are the fittest for the Service of God; and if afterwards they wanted them, it was out of Necessity, not Choice. The *Israelites*, when in *Egypt*, had no Temples, no consecrated Places that we find, but were (without question) forced to make as hard a Shift to serve God, as they did to live. Yet this was esteem'd no Precedent for the Times that follow'd, for as soon as ever they came into the Wilderness, they erected the Tabernacle. I answer,

2. That it seems very plain that the Apostles and Primitive Christians, tho' by reason of the then present Times, they had not, and (indeed) could not have Publick and more Solemn Places of Worship, yet Consecrated Places they had, though in *Private Houses*, and those fixed, determin'd, and set wholly apart for the Service of God. These were commonly *ὑπερῶνα* or *Upper Rooms*, of which we read, *Acts* i. 13, 14. and again *Chap.* xx. 7, 8. and which we may conceive to be not unlike our private Chapels in the Houses of great Men. In these the Christians of the two or three first Centuries were forced for the most part to serve God, till it pleased him at last to cause the *Roman Empire* to bow and

and do Homage to the Scepter of Christ, by *Constantine's* Conversion to the Christian Religion. And then the whole known World soon contributed as it were in one common Purse, to advance the Honour of Christianity, by erecting every where the most magnificent Temples for the Worship of the true God, in the Name of his only Son the ever blessed Jesus. Which Piety of theirs was not only praised but imitated, till towards the Middle of the last Century; when there arose in this our Nation a Set of Men who pretending to the Spirit (but certainly not that Spirit which moved our Saviour to vindicate the Honour of his Fathers House,) have counted it a high Piece of Religion to abhor Religious Places, and thought they have done God good Service, in profaning and demolishing those Temples, which by the Piety of their Ancestors were built for his Worship. But to proceed,

2. Places appropriated for Divine Service, are not only warranted by the continual Practice of the Church in all Ages, but founded also upon the Law of Nations and Nature itself. For as *Cicero* said in a like Case, what Nation is there so Barbarous and Undisciplin'd, as not to acknowledge that there is a God who ought to be Worship'd? So may we

we say in this, What Nation is there so rude, and void of common Sense as not to understand, that the solemn Worship of God cannot be duly perform'd, without an appropriate Place allotted thereto? And accordingly we find that all Ages, and all Nations of the World, have had their Temples and Consecrated Places for the Exercise of their Religion. We may therefore here very fitly use the Apostle's Argument in another Case, 1 Cor. xi. where reproving them because in their holy Assemblies, their Men pray'd with their Heads cover'd, and their Women with theirs uncover'd, he thus expresseth himself, v. 14. *Doth not even Nature it self teach you, that if a Man have long Hair it is a Shame unto him?* So may we say, doth not even Nature it self teach us, that as every thing ought to be done in it's due Time and Season, so every thing ought to be done in it's due Place; common Things in common Places, and sacred Things in Places that are Sacred? And shall every City have it's Hall for the Executing of Justice, and not a Church for the Exercise of Religion? Shall every thing have it's suitable Place, and God's Service only be turn'd out of Doors, and go a begging every Moment to private Houses for Entertainment? *Doth not*

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even Nature it self Teach you in this? I shall wave the further Prosecution of this Argument, as having sufficiently made out the Truth of my first Proposition, *viz.* That it is necessary there should be Places solemnly Consecrated and set apart for the Worship of God. And proceed now to shew,

Secondly, That the Places thus set apart for his Worship ought to be had in all due Respect and Reverence. And this I shall prove both by plain Scripture and clear Evidence grounded on Scripture.

1. For Scripture, The Words of my Text (if rightly consider'd) sufficiently prove the Matter in Hand. For the Royal Psalmist therein sets forth the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God, in giving him an Opportunity of resorting to his House, makes a grateful Acknowledgment for the Mercy vouchsafed him, and expresth himself in such a manner, as plainly shews what Awful and Reverential Thoughts he had of the House of God, and the Majesty of that tremendous Being which is present in it. *But as for me, I will come into thy House in the multitude of thy Mercy, and in thy Fear will I Worship towards thy Holy Temple.*

But

But if this is not Satisfactory, there is another Text of Scripture, which puts the Matter out of all question; *Levit. xix. 30.* Where God lays a positive Command upon us to pay Respect and Reverence to his House in these Words, *Reverence my Sanctuary.*

If it be here Objected, that this was a Precept belonging to the Old Testament, and therefore that it doth not concern us who live under another Dispensation; I answer,

1. That the Men who make this Objection seem to be of the same Mind with that desperate and abandon'd * Heretick in the primitive Times, who held, that the God of the *Jews* is not the same with the God of the *Gentiles* or *Christians*. What? must the *Jews* reverence the Places wherein *their* God is worship'd? And may we *Christians* profane the Places where *our* God is served? Or rather, do not both they and we Worship one and the same God, and therefore owe him the same Reverence?

Certainly (my Brethren) Christ never came into the World to teach Men to be irreverent, or to worship God with Indecency and Disorder. Outward Reverence may in-

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deed be granted to be one of the lesser Things in Religion; but then 'tis to be remember'd, that Christ never design'd the Annulling the least of God's Commandments. 'Tis true, there were many Typical Ceremonies injoin'd under the Old Testament, which are now abolish'd under the New. But who dare's say, that to use the Places of God's Worship with due Reverence was a Typical Ceremony? Or rather, who sees not that 'tis of moral Obligation, and agreeable to the Law of Nature it self?

2. We may observe that these two are join'd together, *Keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary*. Now what God hath join'd together, let not Man put asunder. Many of those who make this Objection do not only confess, but eagerly contend that the Commandment concerning the Observation of the Sabbath highly concern's us Christians: Why then should not that concerning the Sanctuary equally affect us?

3. Let us observe the Reason of the Commandment, *I am the Lord*. As if he should have said, I am the Great and Glorious God, and therefore *my Sanctuary* the Place of my Worship, and whatever belongs thereto, ought to be revered. 'Tis a Maxim for the most part true, that where the Reason of the Pre-

cept is immutable; there the Precept it self is of moral Obligation. And if this be so, I would fain know why this Reason should not concern us, as much as ever it did the Jews?

But to put this Matter out of all doubt, I shall make it appear that our Saviour when he came into the World, was so far from annulling this Precept of reverencing the Places of God's Worship, that he doth by Precept and Example, both by Word and Deed, most zealously press it. This is plain from that celebrated Place I before mention'd; *Matth. xxi. 12, 13.* *And Jesus went into the Temple, and cast out all them that Bought and Sold in the Temple, and overthrew the Tables of the Money-changers, and the Seats of them that sold Doves: And said unto them, it is written, my House shall be called the House of Prayer, but ye have made it a Den of Thieves.*

If it be still Objected, that this was the Jewish Temple, which had a Typical Holiness in it which was not yet fully expired; I answer,

1. That he who considers our Saviour's Zeal in this Matter, the like to which we read not of in any Passage of the Gospel, will never believe that all this was spent about a Typical Ceremony which was shortly to cease and then actually ceasing.

Answer, That the Place which our Sa-
 viour thus vindicated from Profanation was
 not the *Jewish* Temple strictly so called, or
 any Place of Typical or Ceremonial Worship,
 but the *Atrium Gentium*, the Place where
 those *Gentiles* worship'd God who submitted
 not to the Ceremonies of *Moses's* Law, and
 therefore there was no Typical or Ceremonial
 Holiness in this Place. For the right under-
 standing of this, we are to observe, that in
 our Saviour's Time the Temple had three
 Courts belonging to it. (1.) The inmost or
 Priest's Court, wherein the Altar of Burnt-
 Offerings stood; into this none but the Priests
 and Levites might enter. (2.) The middle or
 greater Court which encompass'd the other;
 and into this the *Jews* of all sorts, and the cir-
 cumcised Profelytes came to worship. With-
 out this there was a 3d Court, which sur-
 rounded that of the *Israelites*, as ~~did~~ ^{that} the
 Priest's; and in this Court those *Gentiles*
 worship'd who embraced the God of *Israel*,
 but submitted not to the *Mosaical* Ceremonies.
 And it was this Court, wherein this Market
 was kept, and which our Saviour thus vindi-
 cated from Profanation. For as for the other
 Courts of the Temple, the *Jews* respected and
 revered them even to Scrupulosity. They
 were so careful of them, as to permit no un-

circumcised Person to put his Foot therein, *Acts* xxi. 28. They trod the very Pavement thereof with a Religious Observance and Curiosity. They would not suffer (as *Josephus* relates) any other Building, no not the Palace of *Agrippa* the King, to have any Prospect towards them, lest they should be polluted with a profane Look. How incredible then is it, that they should endure them to be made a Place for Buying and Selling, yea, a Market for Sheep and Oxen? So that this Fact of our Saviour's is so far from concerning the Jewish Temple only, that it principally belongs to the Gentile Oratories, it being a Reproof to the Jews for abusing them.

It is plain then that this Text doth chiefly concern us Christians; we are now to see how far: For which Purpose there are several remarkable Circumstances in it. As

1. We may observe that this Fact of our Saviour's, is punctually related by all the Four Evangelists, by *St. Matth.* in the Text already cited, by *St. Mark* xi. 16, &c. by *St. Luke* xix. 45, &c. and by *St. John* ii. 13, 14. Without Question then this Fact of our Saviour's doth very much concern his Church, otherwise the Spirit of God would never have taken such Care to have it so punctually recorded by all the Evangelists.

2. 'Tis

2. 'Tis observable that our Saviour vindicates the Honour of his Fathers House by a Miracle, and that so great a one that some have concluded it to be one of his greatest, For was it not very strange, that He, being but one single Man, and unarm'd with any other Weapon but a poor Whip, should by his own Strength, in the sight of the Priests and Scribes who hated him to Death, and sought every Day Occasion of destroying him ; was it not strange (I say) that he should drive so many Men, greedily bent upon their gainful Trade, out of the Temple, and all this without any Tumult, Noise, or Contradiction? Surely this Act of our Saviour, was an Act of Divine Power and Omnipotence, whereby, as God, he so ruled their Hearts and Hands that they should not dare, nor be able to resist him.

3. We may observe how strict our Saviour was in vindicating the Honour of his Father's House, He would not suffer so much as *a Vessel to be carry'd through the Temple*, Mark xi. 16. whereas the Jews might (with some shew of Reason) have pleaded this for themselves, that what they did was for a pious End, to serve the Uses of the Temple. For the Sheep, and Oxen, and Doves were sold for Sacrifices, and the Money-changers were such as dealt in

in exchanging and returning of Money offer'd
 and presented to the Treasury of the Temple.
 For the Israelites were by the Law, to come
 to Jerusalem (how far soever they dwelt from
 it) and there offer the half Shekel for the
 Use of the Temple, Exod. xxx. 12, &c. and
 2. And lastly, 'Tis observable with what Zeal
 he did all this; on other Occasions, and when
 he met with other Sins, we find he made Use
 only of the Rod of his Word and Mouth, and
 chastened them with a bare and naked Re-
 proof: Sometimes indeed sharp, but for the
 most part sweetned with the greatest Meek-
 ness and Gentleness. But in *this* Matter, and
 upon *this* Occasion, the Prince of Peace, the
 mild and merciful Saviour, makes Use of the
 Force of his Arm, lays about him, turns the
 Tables of the Money-changers Topsy-turvy,
 takes the Rod in his Hand and slashes those
 Sacrilegious Wretches out of the Temple.
 Well therefore might his Disciples call to
 mind that Text; *the Zeal of my House hath*
even eaten me up. In a Word, whatever vain
 Men may think, to profane Houses of Prayer,
 must needs be a great Sin, on which our Sa-
 viour spent so great an Indignation. And so
 much for the direct Scripture Arguments, I
 come now,

on those Arguments which are drawn from the
 Example of the Money-changers, who were such as these.

2. To

2. To prove to you, from Arguments grounded on Scripture, that Places set apart for divine Worship ought to be revered. And I shall reduce them all to this general one, that the Places of God's Worship, are Sacred and Holy Places, and therefore ought to be used as such, with a reverent and discriminative Respect. This indeed will in the Opinion of some, be thought to be the Proof of a doubtful Thing, by another questionable Medium. For they that are not willing to grant that Reverence is due to Churches, will by no means allow that they are Holy Places. That is an Assertion which they look upon as favouring of Idolatry or Superstition at least, and consequently at no hand to be admitted by Protestants. But let such Persons (if there are any such present) suspend a while their rash Censures, lay aside their ungrounded Prejudices, and with Christian Meekness and Candour attend to what I shall produce for the clearing and asserting of this Truth.

I observe therefore, in the first Place, a threefold Distinction of Holiness, into Inherent, Typical, or Relative.

1. There is an Inherent Holiness consisting in certain gracious Habits, Dispositions, and Operations, inhering or residing in the Subject denominated Holy, which is otherwise called

called Purity, Righteousness, or Integrity. This Holiness is to be found only in reasonable Creatures, Angels, and Men; and no Man was ever so absurd as to ascribe it to the Places of God's Worship.

2. There is a Typical Holiness, whereby a Thing is call'd Holy, with respect to some other Thing really Holy, whereof it is a Type or Representation. This kind of Holiness was proper to the *Jewish* Temple, wherein almost every Place and Thing had a Typical Respect to somewhat Holy: But especially the *Holy of Holies* was so call'd, because it was a Type of Heaven. This Holiness, together with the *Jewish* Temple, is now at an End, nay, it ceased before the Temple was destroy'd, as soon as Christ was Sacrificed, and the Veil thereof rent. This therefore doth not belong to our Churches, or Christian Oratories. But,

3. There is a Relative Holiness generally so called, whereby a Thing is denominated Holy, not *for* or *from* it self, nor as a Type and Figure, but for some other Relation it hath to some Thing Holy. And in this Sense 'tis certain that our Churches, or Places of Religious Worship, are Sacred and Holy Places. This Relative Holiness doth and will continue to the End of the World. Most

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Ridiculous therefore, or rather most Deplorable, is the Folly of those, who laugh at the Term of an Holy Place; who take away all difference of Places, and dare boldly (if not blasphemously) assert, that a Barn or Stable is as Good and Holy as a Church, they being both a like made of Wood and Stone, and consisting of the same corruptible Materials. For that some Places are in this Respect, and upon the Account of this Relation to be looked upon as more Holy than others, is clear from Scripture; particularly from those Places wherein the Temple of God among the *Jews*, is term'd his *Holy Place*, his *Holy House*, and as in the Text his *Holy Temple*. But because it may possibly be urged that all these are to be understood of a Typical Holiness which nothing concerns us, I shall further prove this from Places of Scripture wherein no Typical or Legal Holiness can be imagin'd. Such is that, *Exod. iii. 5.* where God speaking to *Moses* from out of the Bush, saith thus; *Draw not nigh hither, put off thy Shoes from off thy Feet, for the place whereon thou standest is Holy Ground.* The same is again repeated to *Josbua* by an Angel of God, *Josb. v. 15.* But, which is more, the New Testament speaks in the same Language, *2 Pet. i. 18.* *And this Voice* (said *St. Peter*) *which came from Heaven we*
D heard,

beard, when we were with him in the Holy Mount.

'Tis spoken of Mount Tabor, which is call'd *the Holy Mount* not for any inherent Holiness; for 'twas but an heap of Earth as well as other Mountains: nor for any Typical Holiness, for the Gospel admits no such Types; but relatively with respect to Christ's glorious Presence manifested thereon, for which it was Consecrated not only for the present, but look'd upon by St. Peter as an holy Place for many Years after. But,

2. To resolve this general Reason into it's several Particulars, we must observe that the Places of God's Worship, are thus relatively Holy upon account of a triple Relation.

1. In Relation to God's Propriety in them.

2. To God's Presence in them.

3. To the Service of God perform'd in them. And,

1. Churches or the Places of God's Worship are relatively Holy, in regard to God's Propriety in them; they are *His* Houses, *His* as they are Dedicated to him and his immediate Service, *His* as he is pleased to accept the Offering and to acknowledge them as his own Right and Property. For we find in sacred Scripture, that the glorious and magnificent Temple which was dedicated to the Service of God at *Jerusalem*, was accepted

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and own'd by our Saviour himself as his House, *Mat. xxi. 13.* *It is written my House shall be called the House of Prayer.* Now, our Lord having so clearly and expressly asserted his Right to, and Property in that Temple, which was erected for the Worship of God under the Law, gives us sufficient ground to believe, that he is likewise graciously pleased to accept and acknowledge as *his* those Temples, or Churches, which under the Gospel are dedicated to his Service. And he being the God of Purity and Holiness the Places thus honour'd with this Relation to him, must upon that Account, be deem'd Holy.

2. Churches, or the Places of God's Worship are relatively Holy upon the Account of God's more immediate Presence in them. For though the Scriptures do assure us, that God is every where present in that *he fills Heaven and Earth*: Yet this hinders not but that he may be more peculiarly present in Places duly Consecrated and Set apart for his Worship. And the Words of our Saviour, *Mat. xviii. 20.* do naturally and without straining favour this Assertion. *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* For in the Verse before he tells us that if *Two* (*i. e.* any Number of Men whatsoever) *shall agree upon Earth, as touching any*
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thing which they shall ask, it shall be granted them; and then follows the Reason, for where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them. In which Words it is plain that our Blessed Lord, would not only convince his faithful Servants of the Efficacy of Prayer in general, but also recommend to them publick Prayers, by a particular Promise of his Presence at them. For Harmony and Agreement in Prayer is certainly very acceptable to God, and will be so far attended with his Blessing as to obtain it's Reward. But then this Agreement imply's not only a mutual Consent as to the subject Matter of Prayer, but also as to the Place where this Prayer shall be made. That it imply's a mutual Consent as to the Matter of Prayer it is Evident; for 'tis upon Supposition of such an Agreement, that our Saviour promises to grant the Thing that is pray'd for. That it imply's a like Consent as to the Place where this Prayer shall be made is no less clear; for the Persons who assemble together to Pray, must have a Place in which they may Assemble; and what Place so proper as the Church, the House of God, which our Lord himself is pleased to dignify with the Title of the *House of Prayer* and (for our Encouragement to resort to it) to assure us of

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his immediate Presence in it. And since our Saviour useth this as an Argument, why we should frequent the House of God, he thereby plainly gives us to understand that he is more peculiarly Present in it than in other Places: Otherwise we must Suppose him endeavouring to persuade us to our Duty, by that which is really no Motive at all, and so blasphemously fasten an Absurdity upon him, who is the God of all Wisdom, and from whom nothing frivolous or absurd can proceed.

It is plain then from the Text under our Consideration, that God is more especially present in the Places of his Holy Worship than other where. But to explain the manner how he is so, is a matter of greater Difficulty. The Learned Mr. *Mede* makes this Specification of the divine Presence, whereby God is said to be in one Place, more than another, to consist in his Train or Retinue. "A King (saith he) is there present, where his Court is, where his Train and Retinue are. So God the Lord of Hosts is there specially present, where his Guards, the Blessed Angels keep their sacred Station". This Hypothesis he support's by several Arguments not hastily to be rejected, proves it to be consonant to the Revelation of the Holy Scripture,

Scripture, and that it serves to explain and illustrate several Texts, which otherwise seem not so easily to be accounted for. The time will not permit me to enlarge upon them, and therefore referring you to his own Words in his Discourse upon, *Eccles. v. 1.* I proceed,

3. To shew you, that Churches or the Places of God's Worship are relatively Holy upon the Account of the Service of God perform'd in them. Under the Law indeed, the Place sanctify'd the Service confined to it, but under the Gospel the Service required, sanctifieth the Place where it is perform'd. This our Lord intimate's to us in these Words, *which is the greater, the Gift, or the Altar that Sanctifieth it?* Matth. xxiii. 18. The Gift (or Sacrifice) here spoken of was Holy upon the Altar, but offered in any other Place would have been abominable. Whereas the service of Christians, being in it self always good and acceptable to God, hath a particular Promise annexed to it, when perform'd in the Unity of the Church, and the Assemblies of his faithful Servants in it. And because these Assemblies cannot be held without publick Order confining them to certain Places, therefore those Places though capable of no Holiness in themselves, are notwithstanding to be esteem'd as Holy (not only for the Reasons above mention'd

mention'd, but also) upon Account of the Holiness of those Actions, for which they are appointed.

Besides, that there are Actions in themselves so execrable and abominable, as to reflect Infamy and Dishonour upon the Places where they are committed, every one must confess: Why then should they not as readily own, that those Places wherein God is worship'd with that Decency and Order which the Gospel enjoins, do partake of the Purity and Holiness of the Service perform'd in them? And if the former so justly fill us with Abhorrence and Detestation, why should not the latter when we approach them command our Reverence and Respect. And so I pass to my third and last Particular, *viz.* To shew you,

3. What that Respect and Reverence is, which is due to the House of God, or the Places consecrated to his Service. And the first instance of Respect, which I shall mention as due to them; Is,

1. That we resort to, and frequent them. This is the very End for which they are erected, that we may assemble our selves together in the Spirit of Love, Unity, and Christian Meekness, and offer up our Prayers and Praises to the great Creator and Sustainer of all

all Things. And if we neglect or refuse so to do, we are guilty of a breach of that Respect which is due to the House of God, and the Majesty of that tremendous Being which resides in it. It is in Effect to refuse to *ascribe unto him the Honour due unto his Name*; it is as if we should say we *will not come unto him that we may have Life*: It plainly shews that we have not such reverent and awful Thoughts of God as we ought to have, and that we think it too much to be constantly present at his publick Worship. And what a grievous Affront this is to him, every one must be sensible, who doth but consider what the Excellency and Majesty of God is; how worthy of our utmost Adorations, and what a Condescension it is in him, upon any Terms at all to accept of our poor and imperfect Services.

Hence then we may take Occasion, to reprehend, not only those who out of a culpable remissness and inadvertency, neglect to resort to the House of God, when an Opportunity presents it self; but those also who absent themselves upon a seemingly Religious Account: I mean such as leave the Communion of our Church, for the sake (as they pretend) of a purer Worship where they are not confined to set and prescribed Forms of Prayer, but can serve God in a more free and enlarged Man-

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er, and offer up their Prayers as Occasion
 and their Necessities shall require. These
 Men are so far from looking upon God's
 House of Prayer as an Holy Place, and there-
 upon paying that Reverence and Respect
 which is due to it, that they generally shun
 it, as if it were impious and profane, and
 scarce ever approach it, but when Curiosity
 or some other Motive, not more commenda-
 ble inclines them to it. But have they indeed
 sufficient ground from the Word of God (the
 Rule they would be thought to go by) for
 such a Practice? Or rather, do they not Act
 in direct Contradiction to it, when they thus
 break the Unity of the Church, and endea-
 vour as far as in them lies, to prevent it's be-
 coming one Fold, under one Shepherd, Jesus
 Christ the Righteous? Is their Worship in-
 deed, a purer Worship than Ours? Are the
 prescribed Forms of Prayer they so much Ca-
 vil at, less agreeable to the Will of God re-
 veal'd to us in the Holy Scripture, than the
 Extemporary, indigested Effusions of their
 Teachers? Nay rather, are not those very
 Extemporary and (as they pretend) Unpre-
 meditated Prayers, to all Intents and Pur-
 poses, as much a set and stinted Form to the
 respective Congregations concern'd in them,
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as the Liturgy prescribed to, and used by us? With this only Difference, that whereas we knowing before hand the Form we are to use, and having Time and Opportunity to compare it with the Word of God, and that excellent Pattern our Saviour hath left us to frame our Prayers by, may with Chearfulness and Confidence of their being accepted, offer them up to *Our Father who is in Heaven*. When on the other hand they meeting together unprepared and ignorant of what they are to do, are confined and tied down to the very Words of their Teachers, how absurd and inconsistent soever they may happen to be, and join in them with a Confidence and Assurance of which they may one Day, have Reason to be ashamed.

But my Brethren, let not us *forsake the assembling our selves together* in God's Holy House, *as the manner of such is*; but rather, with the Royal Psalmist in my Text, resolve to lay hold of every Opportunity of resorting to it. Let us persuade our selves that 'tis out of *the multitude of God's Mercy*, that we have such a free and uninterrupted Access thereto, and offer up our Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving to the Throne of Grace, for indulging to us so invaluable a Blessing. Let

us contemplate our own Happiness, in being
 not only Born within the Pale of Christ's
 Church, but also in being Nursed up (for so
 we of the Church of *England* may justly boast
 our selves to be) in the Bosom of a Church
 the best constituted of any this Day to be
 found in the Christian World ; whether we
 respect the Soundness of her Doctrine, or the
 Excellency of her Common Prayers and De-
 votions, and Forms of administering the Holy
 Sacraments ; whether we regard the Decency
 of her Ceremonies, or her Primitive and Apo-
 stolical Government. A Church it is, which
 after a long Night of *Popish* Darkness and
 Apostacy overspreading it, and the rest of the
 Western Churches, was by excellent Men
 raised up by God himself for that Purpose,
 reform'd and restored to it's antient Purity :
 a Church reform'd without Heat or Extrava-
 gant Zeal, without Tumult or Sedition, with
 the calm, deliberate, and full Consent of all
 the Powers of this Kingdom, Ecclesiastical
 and Civil : a Church no sooner planted than
 it was watered with the Blood of those Holy
 Men that planted it, who chearfully died in
 Defence of it ; a Church establish'd by the
 repeated Laws of our Kings and Princes in
 their several Reigns, and from time to time
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victoriously asserted by a Learned Clergy against all the Cavils of her Adversaries, both those of the *Conclave*, and of the *Consistory*. In a Word, a Church it is, wherein whosoever is truly disposed to goodness (what ever Defects he may chance to spy in some of her Members) may *himself* be as good and holy as he will, and the more strictly he lives up to her Rules and Precepts the more holy he shall certainly be: a Church wherewith they who cannot hold Communion (I speak advisedly) upon the same ground, as they depart from her, must have been *Schismatics* if they had lived, in any the best Part or Age of the Christian World since the Days of the Apostles. But to proceed,

2. Another instance of Respect due to the House of God, is to behave our selves when we come to it, with a Decency suitable to the Dignity of the Place, and the Majesty of that great and glorious Being that resides in it. To approach God's House with Carelessness and Indifference, is plainly to declare our Contempt of it. For who, that looks on it as his House, can come into it with the same negligence and unconcernedness, as if it were allotted only to common and ordinary Uses? Who, that considers how God is there pre-

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sent, attended with his glorious Retinue of holy Angels, but must be fill'd with an awful Fear and Dread; and consequently discover by his *outward* Carriage and Demeanour, how much the *inward* Thoughts and Affections of his Heart are moved and warm'd at the Apprehension of it? Who that remembers that plain and express Command of God to *Moses* (which I have already mention'd,) *Put off thy Shoes from off thy Feet, for the Place whereon thou standest is holy Ground*; but will think himself obliged to use some reverential Gesture, such as uncovering the Head or the like, when he comes into the House of God? For God is *there* as much present (though not in so visible a manner) as he was to *Moses* in the Bush; and therefore we ~~may~~ have the same Reason, when we approach to it, to shew some outward Token of our Respect and Reverence thereto, *viz.* because *it is holy Ground*. But indeed, this is the least Part of that Reverence which is due to the House of God. For,

3. And lastly, we must above all Things take care that we behave our selves with Seriousness and Devotion when we are in it. God who is every where, by the Immensity of his Nature, is (as I have before told you) in

in a more peculiar manner present in the Assemblies of his Saints, and the Behaviour of every one that comes into His House, is open to his immediate Sight. Must it not therefore be a very high Affront to him, when Men have not a due Regard to the Place of his Presence, nor their Minds possess'd and fill'd with awful Thoughts of his Majesty? when they are cold and indeyout and irreverent in his Service? and offer up their Prayers and Praises to him in a lazy and heedless Manner? And yet as great a Dishonour as this is to God, 'tis a very common Thing in this Age, and prevails among the far greater Part of profess'd Christians. One cannot but lament the present State of Christian Devotion, when we compare it with what it was formerly, and behold how much it is degenerated from the Zeal and Fervency of primitive Times. When the Jews were return'd from their Captivity, and began to rebuild their Temple, the Younger sort who had not seen the *antient* Temple, admired the Foundations of the *New*, and rejoiced at the Structure and Sumptuousness of it. But the Old Men, who had seen the former Temple, wept aloud when they beheld the latter. And may not this be apply'd to the present

present State of the Christian Church? If
 we consider what it is now, we have reason
 indeed to bless God, for that Discipline and
 Order, and Devotion which is yet to be seen
 in it. But when we read what it was in it's
 first Institution, how strict it's Discipline, and
 how fervent it's Devotion was, we have
 just cause to bewail the present Condition of
 it. Men indeed come to Church now, and
 appear at the Service of God as they did
 formerly, but where is that Piety and Zeal,
 and Fervency which once animated the Pro-
 fessors of Christianity? And how slightly
 and unconcernedly do the generality of Chri-
 stians now perform the Offices of their Holy
 Religion, whilst, they confess their Sins
 without any Sense of them, ask of God to
 hear those Prayers, which they do not at-
 tend to themselves, and draw nigh unto him,
 with their Lips, when their Hearts are far
 from him, and their Minds are either at
 their Farms or their Merchandise? God ex-
 pects that we should not only *keep his Sab-
 baths*, but also *reverence his Sanctuary*; and
 what *Jacob* said of the Place where God
 first appear'd to him, may in a literal Sense
 be said of the House of God, *How dread-
 ful is this Place! this is none other but the
 House*

House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven. We ought to have a regard to God's Presence wherever we are, but in the Church where he is more peculiarly present we should tremble to offend him. For as the Psalmist said, (I shall conclude with his Words,) God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of his Saints, and to be had in Reverence of all them that are about him.

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